

# Millersville, sister universities may adjust their own tuition under new state policy

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Millersville University and its 13 sister schools will soon have more power over how much they charge students.

As part of its ongoing system redesign, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education last month approved a new tuition policy granting each state-owned university the right to set its own tuition.

Currently, state-owned universities set their own fees, including room and board, but base tuition — now at \$7,716 — is set by the state.

“At the end of the day, it is a positive move by the system,” Millersville President Daniel Wubah told LNP, adding that the new policy should help the university recruit students and provide more financial aid to low-income students.

Millersville's per-credit tuition model, in which full-time students taking more than 12 credits end up paying more for each additional credit, is here to stay -- at least for now, he said.

Whether tuition will rise or fall in response to the new policy is more difficult to predict.

“It’s too early to assume which direction we will go,” Wubah said. “But my goal as president is to make education more affordable.”

The new pricing method is PSSHE's latest move as the 36-year-old state system attempts to redefine itself.

Since 2010, state universities have relied on tuition increases to make up for enrollment woes caused in part by a statewide decline in high school graduates.

Millersville's enrollment, for example, has dropped from 8,729 in 2010 to 7,781 in 2018, although it was one of two state universities, the other being West Chester, to increase enrollment last year.

Meanwhile, tuition at Millersville has increased from \$5,804 to \$9,540 for an in-state student taking 15 credits per semester.

New tuition figures could be implemented as early as fall 2020. Each university must get PSSHE board approval before moving forward with its plan.

Under the policy, schools can tentatively set tuition rates two years at a time, which could provide students greater predictability regarding their education expense. They're also permitted to bill more for certain programs that are costly to run.

Universities will be able to adjust tuition rates based on regional economic differences, such as household income and cost of living, and students' ability to pay.

Census data shows Lancaster County's median household income is \$61,492. In Chester County, home to West Chester and Cheyney universities, it's \$92,417. In Columbia County, where Bloomsburg University resides, it's \$48,395.